

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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FM AMEMBASSY PARIS

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AMEMBASSY ANKARA

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AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG

AMEMBASSY OSLO

AMEMBASSY OTTAWA

AMEMBASSY REYKJAVIK

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

USMISSION NATO

USNMR SHAPE

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CINCLANT

C O N F I D E N T I A L PARIS 33684

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, MILI, MPOL, MCAP, NATO, FR

SUBJECT: EUROPEAN ARMAMENT COOPERATION: FRENCH POLICY

REF: A. PARIS 31853; B. PARIS 32712; C. PARIS 33318

1. SUMMARY: SENIOR FRENCH OFFICIAL HAS GIVEN US
ADDITIONAL INSIGHT INTO CURRENT GOF THINKING ON
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EUROPEAN ARMAMENT COOPERATION. HIS EMPHASIS WAS ON

CAUTIOUS APPROACH FRENCH ARE TAKING TO JANUARY DISCUSSION OF THIS SUBJECT WITH THEIR EUROPEAN ALLIES.
END SUMMARY.

2. WE DISCUSSED FRENCH APPROACH TO EUROPEAN ARMAMENT COOPERATION DECEMBER 19 WITH JACQUES MARTIN. MARTIN IS A SENIOR DIPLOMAT AND DEPUTY SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE GENERAL SECRETARIAT OF NATIONAL DEFENSE, WORKING UNDER THE PRIME MINISTER AND RESPONSIBLE FOR INTER-MINISTERIAL COORDINATION OF POLITICAL/MILITARY SUBJECTS SUCH AS ARMAMENT COOPERATION. HE TOOK THE SAME CAUTIOUS LINE REFLECTED BY DE LABOULAYE (REF A), DE LA ROCHE-FORDIERE (REF B) AND PAGNIEZ (REF C), SAYING THAT FRENCH WOULD GO TO JANUARY MEETING WITH EUROPEAN ALLIES TO OBTAIN BETTER IDEA OF WHAT ALLIES HAVE IN MIND. THIS WOULD BE EXPLORATORY MEETING RATHER THAN MOMENT FOR A MAJOR FRENCH INITIATIVE. IF RESULTS OF MEETING SHOW THAT THERE IS SOMETHING PRAGMATIC THAT CAN BE DONE TO IMPROVE EUROPEAN COOPERATION ON PROCUREMENT AND PRODUCTION OF WEAPONS, FRENCH ARE READY TO FOLLOW UP.

3. MARTIN SAID HE VIEWS "STANDARDIZATION" AS HAVING THREE COMPONENTS. FIRST, "INTEROPERABILITY," THE SUBJECT THAT THE FRENCH HAVE PUSHED IN THE PAST AT NATO AND WHICH--ACCORDING TO MARTIN--THE GOF INTENDS TO PURSUE ACTIVELY IN THE FUTURE WITHIN NATO. MARTIN CITED EXAMPLE OF INABILITY OF FRENCH-BUILT SIDEWINDER AIR-TO-AIR MISSILES TO BE MOUNTED ON US AIRCRAFT BECAUSE FRENCH DESIGNED THEIR SIDEWINDERS FOR PARTICULAR CARRIER ON FRENCH AIRCRAFT. MARTIN ACKNOWLEDGED THAT FRENCH WERE AT FAULT IN THAT PARTICULAR CASE FOR NOT PROVIDING "INTEROPERABILITY." AS ANOTHER EXAMPLE, HE CITED WHEEL RIMS OF FRENCH MILITARY TRUCKS THAT HAVE SIX-BOLT ATTACHMENTS WHILE GERMAN TRUCKS HAVE FIVE-BOLT ATTACHMENTS, INSURING THAT NEITHER CAN USE THE OTHER'S WHEELS. MUNDANE AS THESE EXAMPLES MAY APPEAR, SAID MARTIN, THEY ARE PRECISELY THE SORT OF THING THAT COULD SPELL THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN VICTORY AND DEFEAT IN A CLOSE STRUGGLE. HE CONCLUDED THAT NATO SHOULD STRIVE
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FOR GREATER AGREEMENT ON DESIGN STANDARDIZATION (E.G., ALL TRUCK WHEELS INTERCHANGEABLE) ACROSS THE BOARD. SIMILARLY, COMMUNICATION UNITS SHOULD HAVE STANDARDIZED --AND THUS INTERCHANGEABLE--PARTS.

4. SECOND, "UNIFORMIZATION," WHICH MARTIN DESCRIBED AS SIMILAR TO WHAT NATO HAS DISCUSSED AS "STANDARDIZATION," BUT WITH TWO DIFFERENCES: LOGISTICS SYSTEMS

WOULD NOT BE INCLUDED; AND SEVERAL SYSTEMS COULD BE ADAPTED TO FULFILL THE SAME TASK. THE FRENCH HOPE THAT THIS ASPECT OF POTENTIAL EUROPEAN ARMAMENT COOPERATION WILL BE OF INTEREST TO THE EUROPEAN ALLIES, AND THEY WILL BE LOOKING FOR EVIDENCE ON THIS POINT AT THE JANUARY MEETING.

5. THIRD, "RATIONALIZATION," BY WHICH THE FRENCH MEAN CO-PRODUCTION AMONG EUROPEANS TO MEET THE ECONOMIC, EMPLOYMENT, R AND D AND POLITICAL CONSIDERATIONS OF THE EUROPEAN ALLIES. HERE' FRENCH FORESEE SOMEWHAT OF A

PROBLEM: WHILE THEY ARE NOT AS WEDDED AS THE US TO "COST-EFFECTIVENESS" AS THE MAJOR DETERMINING FACTOR IN ARMAMENT COOPERATION, NEITHER ARE THEY PREPARED TO SEE THIS COOPERATION BECOME A VEHICLE FOR NATIONAL "PORK BARREL" MANEUVERING THAT WOULD LEAD TO INEFFICIENT HIGH COST, AND INFERIOR PRODUCTS. FRENCH SEE BRITISH AND GERMANS AS PRINCIPAL SERIOUS PLAYERS ALONG WITH FRENCH IN EUROPEAN ARMAMENT COOPERATION. BELGIANS AND ITALIANS COULD PROBABLY BE FITTED IN, TOO. OTHER SMALLER COUNTRIES MAY PROVE TO BE MORE OF A LIABILITY THAN AN ASSET FROM ECONOMIC POINT OF VIEW IF THEY EXPECT TO PLAY MAJOR PARTICIPATING ROLE IN "RATIONALIZATION" OF EUROPEAN ARMAMENT INDUSTRY.

6. MARTIN POINTED TO EXAMPLE OF ALREADY EXISTING COOPERATION AMONG SEVERAL EUROPEAN COUNTRIES ON DEVELOPMENT AND PRODUCTION OF NEW MINE SWEEPER AS EXAMPLE OF PROGRAM THAT COULD BE JOINED BY ADDITIONAL EUROPEAN NATIONS WITH BENEFICIAL ECONOMIC RESULTS FOR ALL. HE DID NOT EXCLUDE POSSIBILITY THAT THIS OPTION MIGHT BE DISCUSSED AT JANUARY MEETING.
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